

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

## 18 11.04.2009

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### LPC APPROVES PARKE-BERNET ADDITION



COURTESY FOSTER + PARTNERS

## FOSTER, FINALLY

When Aby Rosen and Norman Foster first proposed an addition to the Parke-Bernet Building at 980 Madison Avenue, the result was a 22-story tower that was

beloved by the architectural cognoscenti and the developer's boldface friends, and hated by just about everybody else, including residents **continued on page 5**

### FERRY PAVILION PLAN MAKES A SPLASH



JAMES BIBER/PENTAGRAM ARCHITECTS AND JAMES SANDERS

## SOFT LANDING

The city's waterfront once bristled with docks serving the commercial traffic that plied the Hudson and East Rivers. Today, mooring in Manhattan is harder to find—but that may be about to change.

Pentagram Architects and architect James Sanders & Associates have teamed up to produce Riverways, a practical and cost-effective design for a string of riverside boat landings to bring people and watercraft

back to the city's rivers. The scheme, still in its early stages, is in support of a new docks initiative from the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission, a nonprofit group sponsoring a series of programs to commemorate Henry Hudson's voyage of discovery 400 years ago.

"This has been going on ten or 15 years—this idea that the river could again become an integrated **continued on page 9**

### LANDSCAPE ISSUE

FIGHTING FOR THE MODERN GREENSWARD. PAGES 18-21

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### COMMUNITY GROUPS PRESENT OWN PLANS FOR SOUTHEAST WATERFRONT

## EAST RIVER RUCKUS

A coalition of community groups released a proposal on October 17 that calls on the city to rework part of its plan for Manhattan's southeastern waterfront, a portion of which is being designed by SHoP Architects for the Economic Development Corporation.

The group, calling itself OUR (Organizing and Uniting Residents) Waterfront, unites nine other member groups whose concerns range from the Two Bridges housing complex to the entire city. The organization claims to have collected 800 surveys **continued on page 9**



SHoP's vision for Pier 35.

COURTESY SHoP ARCHITECTS

### AMID HUDSON YARDS APPROVAL, CITY MOVES TO SAVE HIGH LINE

## HIGH HOPES

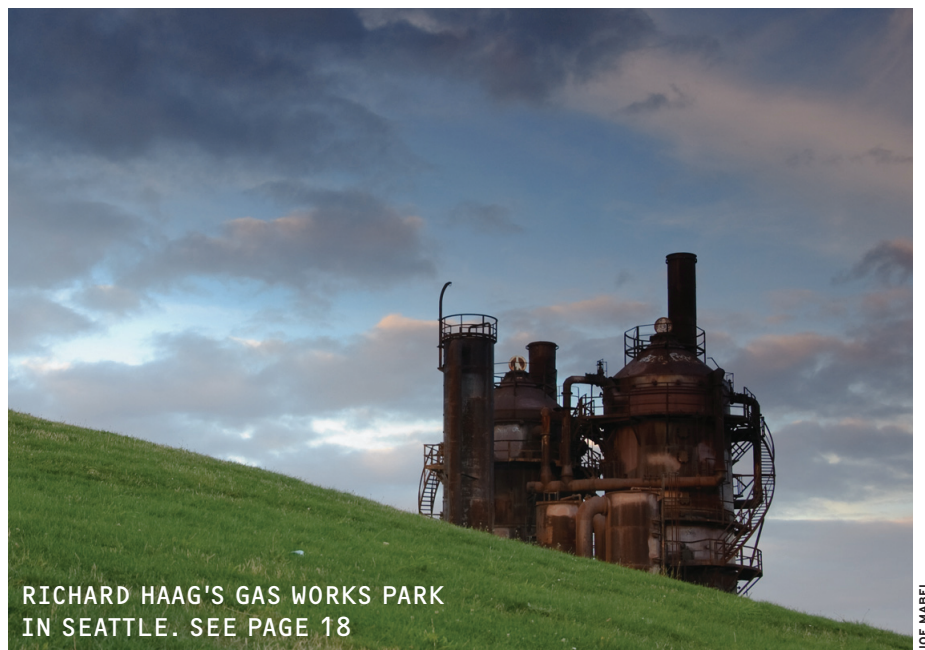
The Related Companies' massive build-out of the Far West Side got its predicted green light on October 19, when the City Planning Commission approved plans for Hudson Yards, with slight modifications, by a vote of 12-1. But the bigger news came when commission **continued on page 3**

### MAYOR WANTS TO SCRUB GOWANUS, AVOIDING SUPERFUND LISTING

## TWICE AS SMELLY

On October 9, from the banks of the Gowanus Canal, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg unveiled a new, \$150 million investment in the waterway's infrastructure. Except that it was not exactly new. Seven years prior, the mayor, then at the beginning of his first term, made a similar visit, and a similar announcement. The catch? That investment never happened.

The 2002 cleanup was to bring the city in compliance with the Clean Water Act, which was being violated during heavy rains that swamped the system and sent sewage into the canal. By 2005, when the improvements still had not been made, the state filed a **continued on page 11**



RICHARD HAAG'S GAS WORKS PARK IN SEATTLE. SEE PAGE 18

JOE MABEL

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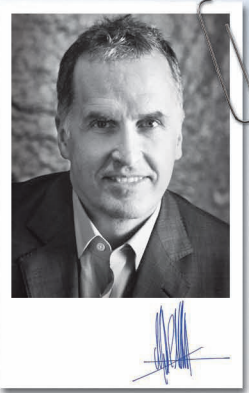
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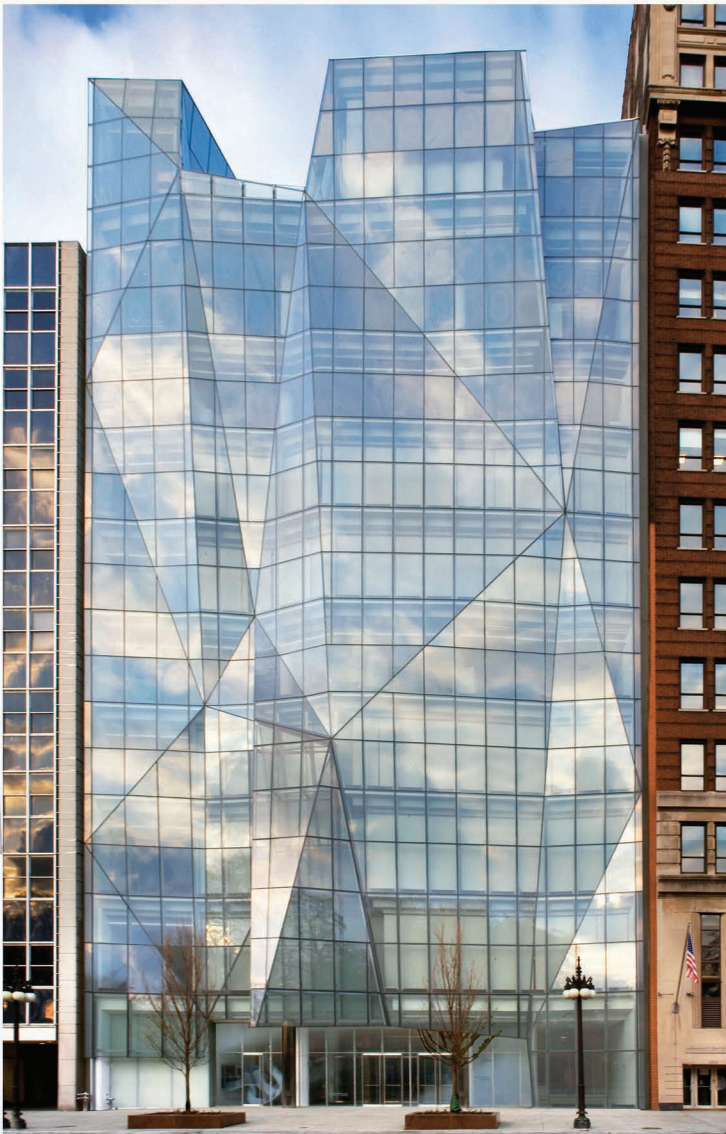
MY TURN

Mark Sexton, FAIA, Partner, Krueck + Sexton Architects, Chicago, Illinois

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WHY WE DO CITY WORK

A few weeks ago, the New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) released its 2009 list of architects eligible for municipal projects. The lucky few numbered 28. The 329 applicants who didn't make the cut, and the many more who didn't bother to figure out the process, may assume it's not worth the effort. But the truth is that New York City, where a complex fraternity of agencies handle contracting individually, has fine-tuned an approach—Robert Moses called it the New York Method—that is relatively generous in involving private-sector architects in public work, especially as compared to other cities.

An informal survey by the AIA shows that architects at public agencies most often serve as administrators and project managers, contracting considerable amounts of work to the private sector. But this is not always the case, setting up an uncomfortable competition for work between city agencies and private firms. As reported in our most recent California edition (*CAN* 08\_10.28.2009), architects in San Francisco have had to launch formal complaints to pry municipal work from the clutches of the Department of Public Works—and its 65-person Bureau of Architecture—whose plate is loaded with 120 projects valued at \$75 million.

In Boston, there is also a department of architecture, but its staff architects function primarily as project managers, while the Massachusetts State University system has initiated a novel approach by which building contracts have been turned over to private companies that handle all aspects of the job, from initial competition to construction, and local architects know they must appeal to those private entities for public school work.

In his compelling analysis, *The Image of the Architect* (Yale, 1983), Andrew Saint found that the fight of private architects to get a share of government work is as old as professional societies themselves. He describes how the American Institute of Architects in the late 1800s sprang from the gentlemen architects of New York joining the business-focused architects of Chicago, both disturbed by “a chronic incompetence in making provisions for the post offices, custom houses, and other official buildings” at a time when construction was booming and the American landscape was forging its identity.

Municipal work is often humble by definition—park sheds, cell-phone towers, and bus shelters—but it can be more than utilitarian infrastructure. It communicates the DNA of our culture and our values. As a European, Saint was astonished that in the United States it was often the private houses that showed the world who Americans are, rather than our public buildings.

For some time now, infrastructure has been everyone's favorite word, but for architects trying to get involved it has remained a slippery goal. On November 16, in Washington, D.C., a conference sponsored by UCLA's Department of Architecture and Urban Design, called WPA 2.0, will urge architects to “take back the streets” and along with them the public buildings, parks, bridges, and roads across the nation that are the most obvious symbols of a true investment in the future. It's a promising sign, and architects must continue that good fight to bring their design perspective and social awareness to public works. Municipal architecture may sound too prosaic—and the effort to get it, too fraught—but it is also the first step to shaping the city itself.

JULIE V. IOVINE AND WILLIAM MENKING

HIGH HOPES continued from front page

chair Amanda Burden made a surprise announcement that the city would move to indefinitely preserve the High Line, the celebrated railway that runs through the site.

That news came after Burden voted in favor of rezoning the western portion of the yards, which had been designated for a stadium in 2005 as part of the city's Olympic bid. “The vision of the High Line will not be realized until it extends all the way from Gansevoort Street to 34<sup>th</sup> Street. That's why I'm pleased to announce that the city is preparing an application to acquire the final piece of the High Line.” Burden said she expected the application to be completed by the end of the year, at which point it will enter the public review process.

The continuation of the elevated park, the first phase of which opened to great fanfare earlier this year, has been an open question. Related, which long appeared ambivalent about the High Line, did seem to warm to the idea as the commission indicated its support for preservation. Until Burden's announcement, though, nothing was assured.

Peter Mullan, vice president for planning and design for Friends of the High Line, said after the announcement that he was excited by the news, but that work remains. “This does not guarantee preservation, but it's the beginning of the process to ensure preservation and the most significant and concrete step in the process,” Mullan said.

The city must now come to an agreement with CSX, the national railroad operator, to purchase the final stretch of track. No previous deal had been made because the tracks would have been demolished under the stadium plan, and the city was subsequently unsure what action the developers would take.

As for the rest of Related's project, the commission approved one commercial and seven residential towers, to be surrounded by open space. Hudson Yards also includes a parcel east of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue that was rezoned in 2005 for commercial and residential use. In deference to the High Line, one tower at the project's southwest corner that would have straddled the elevated park has been pushed back and its height reduced, though it still overhangs the tracks by 50 feet. Changes were also made to the open space, which had been described as “too Bryant Park” by the commission. Now, it will be more tightly integrated with surrounding buildings. In addition, the School Construction Authority will develop a primary school within the western development.

One remaining community objection to the project concerns affordable housing. While Related is building 600 such units off-site, advocates hope to sway the City Council to require more affordable housing, ideally on the site, when the council votes on the project in the next 50 days. **MATT CHABAN**



COURTESY RELATED

LETTERS

BETWEEN THE LINES

I applaud *The Architect's Newspaper* for covering NYC's new *Street Design Manual*, David Byrne's new *Bicycle Diaries* book, plans for Greenwich South, and the editorial on rerouting car traffic through Times Square, all in recent issues. I think it is worth noting that all these subjects have been, for the last 70 some odd years, the province of transportation planners and traffic engineers (how one actually “engineers” traffic is a bit of a mystery to me). And our cities' streets have suffered accordingly. For a good history, read *The Pedestrian and City Traffic* by Carmen

Hass-Klau (Wiley & Sons, 1990).

But can we lay blame solely at planners' and engineers' feet? Where have architects been since Corbu proffered his vision of the city as speed machine? As Moshe Safdie wrote in *The City After the Automobile* (Basic Books, 1997): By the 1990s, “...the isolated pursuit of architectural form had become both plausible and respectable in schools and in practice.” One byproduct is architecture ignoring “...what often appear[s] to be overwhelmingly related transportation problems.” Perhaps (and I hope) we are witnessing a reengagement of architects

with the land between buildings.

MICHAEL KING  
NELSON\NYGAARD CONSULTING ASSOCIATES  
NEW YORK

SPREADING THE WORD

I would like to sign up for *The Architect's Newspaper*, Midwest Edition [see *MWAN* 01\_10.14.2009]. I have been waiting for a Midwest edition of *The Architect's Newspaper* for years and am glad to see it.  
VICTOR JIMENEZ  
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER NOVEMBER 4, 2009

EAVESDROP &gt; SARA HART

## INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE, MAIL FRAUD, RACKETEERING, OH MY...

We never thought we'd hear racketeering and construction data in the same sentence, but here it is. In early October, Reed Construction Data filed suit in federal court against a division of McGraw-Hill Construction called Dodge. The suit charges that Dodge has unlawfully accessed confidential and trade-secret information from Reed since 2002 by using a series of fake companies to pose as Reed customers. The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in New York on October 8, seeks an unspecified amount in lost profits and punitive damages, trial by jury, and injunctive relief as a result of Dodge's misuse of Reed's proprietary construction-project information. Worse yet, Reed claims, Dodge allegedly manipulated the information to create misleading comparisons between its products and services and Reed's in an effort to mislead the marketplace.

Actually, it's about who has the best algorithms when both companies have pretty much the same data. The complaint cites 11 counts of misconduct by Dodge, including fraud, misappropriation of trade secrets and confidential information, unfair competition, tortious interference with prospective economic advantage, violation of New York's general business law, violation of the RICO Act, monopolization, attempted monopolization, and unjust enrichment.

Not kidding. Eavesdrop read the entire 60-page complaint on Reed's website. Riveting, because it names names with adorable code monikers like "straw man," "the Spy," and "Mr. X." These "consultants" reported to the not-so-secretly named director of Competitive Intelligence who, in turn, reported to **Norbert Young**, the president of McGraw-Hill Construction. Young is the boss of everyone at all of the division's "content buckets"—*Architectural Record*, *Engineering News-Record*, and various regional construction publications. While not exactly a *Michael Clayton*-esque melodrama in the making, Eavesdrop will try to answer this burning question: If Dodge owns 80 to 90 percent of the construction-data industry, why would it need to spy on anyone?

Could it be related to the competition for the lucrative AIA contract that gives "official AIA Journal" status to one publication? *Architectural Record* has had the honor since it wrestled it from the now defunct *Architecture* a decade ago. It's renew-or-lose time in 2010, and Eavesdrop hears that there are five companies, besides McGraw-Hill, vying for the contract. Bidders must own or be in partnership with a trade-show producer, because the contract includes responsibility for the annual AIA convention. Two other firms meet all the criteria, but we can't verify if they're in the running. The plaintiff's parent company, Reed Elsevier, runs exhibitions and publishes a lot of content, including *Interior Design*. Ditto Hanley-Wood with its global exhibitions division, *Architect* magazine, and ArchitectTV. What does it all mean for architects? At the very least, it'll tell you just how hot it's going to be at the Miami AIA convention next June.

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**FOSTER, FINALLY** continued from front page of the Carlyle Hotel across the street and, most importantly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which first turned down the proposal in January 2007.

A year and a half later, Foster returned with a vastly different proposal, swapping the rounded glass tower for a five-story, bronze-clad box nearly the exact proportions of the building beneath. Versions of that plan were defeated on two separate occasions, but on October 13, after the further elimination of one story and certain important cosmetic changes, the project finally won approval by a vote of 7–1.

"This is vastly improved, strikingly contemporary," commission chair Robert Tierney said. "Together you'll see them as separate but also part of an ensemble."

Not only did the designers reduce the height of the overall structure to nine stories from ten, but it cost them 20,000 square feet, for a total of 123,000 square feet. And while the height of the building has been lowered nine feet, the street wall has been reduced further, by four feet, because a glass railing surrounding the penthouse terrace has been set back and will no longer be visible from the street.

Additional changes have also been made to the aluminum scrim that encases the building. The color of the anodized aluminum rods has now been darkened to a "mid-tone" bronze. Originally, it was "terra cotta" bronze, before being lightened last July to "cham-

pagne," which was meant to be closer to the limestone below. Now, it falls somewhere in the middle.

To lighten the building's appearance and massing, the space between the aluminum rods has been doubled and the glass facade behind them has been pushed back, winning wide support from the commission. Finally, the corners have been rounded off, a nod to the original look. The developer also reiterated his commitment to fully restore the Parke-Bernet Building, which suffered an ungainly fifth-story addition decades ago.

Roberta Brandes Gratz, the lone dissenting vote, maintained that nothing as large as the Parke-Bernet Building should be built atop it. "There were features I liked," she said of the new design. "If at the proper scale, and set back considerably, I could have found it appropriate. But this was much too massive." Tierney noted that the building had been scaled down considerably, and praised the collaboration between the commission and the developer in getting it to that point. "It's a very close question that requires discretion and judgment," he said. "That's why I think the process here is so important."

As for preservationists, they seemed happy at least that the process was finally over. "Aby Rosen was determined to build on this building," said Nadezhda Williams, a preservation associate at the Historic Districts Council. "At least it's not as bad as before." **MC**

OPEN &gt; CAFE



> **RECESS**  
60 University Place  
Tel: 212-228-5586  
Designer:  
scalar Architecture

KRIS TAMBURELLO

For an establishment that focuses on hot coffee in the winter and frozen yogurt in the summer, a nimble design that makes it equally inviting in both seasons is a plus. That was the challenge faced by the designers for Recess, a cafe that opened this summer at the corner of University Place and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. scalar Architecture built their strategy around the goal of allowing as much flexibility as possible while still looking non-generic. "We didn't want the space to be a neutral box," said Julio Salcedo, founding partner of scalar. He molded the cafe's lower walls, counter, floor, and furniture out of the renewable bamboo blend PlyBoo, whose light and dark striations maximize the design's aesthetic range. "By being able to play up the dark or light of the material, we have the upper hand in terms of being able to transform it," Salcedo said. LED lights on the ceiling can be programmed depending on season and time of day, creating a cool, refreshing atmosphere conducive to selling smoothies in summer, or a warmer vibe for winter. A fabric made of recycled polymers drapes down from the ceiling, dampening sound and partially covering the cafe's windows, lending an air of mystery from the street. The cafe's interior delivers satisfyingly on that promise with offbeat angles, including walls that tilt to allow customers to lean against them while they sip their drinks—in a non-generic way, of course. **JULIA GALEF**

## Architectural experience, think Trespa

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER NOVEMBER 4, 2009

NEW DESIGNS UNVEILED, OPPONENTS VOW TO FIGHT

# BARNES STORMING?



The new museum facing Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

In early October, the Barnes Foundation unveiled designs for its new building on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. The Tod Williams Billie Tsien design attempts to balance the institution's intimate visitor experience and distinctive gallery hanging while presenting a more open, public face. Opponents, including most prominently Robert Venturi, continue to argue that the foundation should stay in its Paul Philippe Cret-designed home in suburban Merion.

Williams and Tsien describe the new design as a gallery in a garden, and the firm is working closely with OLIN on the landscape design. They have replicated the proportions and arrangement of the original galleries, and are adding a sequence of new spaces including a cafe, bookstore, auditorium, and new contemplative spaces. "We want it to feel like a more personalized experience," Tsien said. "It shouldn't feel like the Metropolitan. It should be more like coming into someone's home." The Foundation will continue to admit a restricted number of viewers into the gallery, though it is increasing that number as well as extending viewing hours. "The design encapsulates our goals perfectly," said Derek Gillman, director of the Barnes. "The architects were given a not uncomplicated brief."

The institution is known for its remarkable collection of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Modern works, which founder Albert Barnes hung in eccentric salon-style arrangements



The plaza at 20th Street.

COURTESY BARNES FOUNDATION

that include African masks, wrought iron hinges, and other artifacts. Barnes built the institution as a teaching facility, hoping to draw average people into art appreciation. The Cret building, which boasts bas-reliefs by Jacques Lipchitz, ceiling paintings by Henri Matisse, and tile work with African designs by the Enfield Pottery Works, sits on the grounds of a landscaped arboretum that is used for horticulture classes. According to Gillman, the Cret building will be retained as a study center for the Barnes archives, which includes correspondence from many of the artists in the collection; the horticulture classes will also remain on site.

Opponents continue to argue that moving the collection to a new building will destroy the atmosphere of one of the world's most unique art collections. "It's like discussing what kind of mustache you are going to draw on the Mona Lisa," said Evelyn Yary, a member of the Friends of the Barnes. "The Barnes exists in a wonderful building. These things go together. It's a work of art in itself." While much of Philadelphia's political and cultural establishment has supported the move, Robert

Venturi recently wrote a letter on behalf of the Friends. "The [current] building and site design are an integral part of the collection, and vice versa. Separating them vastly diminishes the value and purpose of both," he wrote. Venturi and the Friends of the Barnes also object to Governor Rendell's pledge of \$30 million in state funding for the project. A new documentary condemning the move and the politics behind it, *The Art of the Steal*, recently garnered praise at the New York Film Festival and will be released in theaters at the beginning of the New Year.

The Foundation and the architects believe the public will benefit from the move. Tsien comments that the Merion location is inaccessible to many potential viewers. "I am entirely comfortable with the ethics of this project," she said. "The programmatic goal is to create a place where more people can see works of art that were originally collected and presented as a kind of democratic action."

Fundraising is more than three quarters done, according to Gillman. The \$200 million project is expected to be complete in late 2011.

ALAN G. BRAKE

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CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY REMAKES PIONEERING PLAYGROUNDS

## Adventure Central



Being a kid—or at least a playground designer—was a lot more fun in the 1970s, before the advent of telephone-book-thick ASTM standards, not to mention things like critical fall heights, head-entrapment guidelines, and the virtual outlawing of sand. “It’s almost like a police state, what you can and cannot do in a playground,” said Paul Friedberg, the landscape architect who created some of New York’s most innovative play spaces. “The freedom that we once had is just completely gone.”

But vestiges of that freewheeling age can be found in Central Park, where the spirit of adventure thrives thanks to restorations this summer of two pioneering playgrounds. In overhauling these spaces to meet modern safety and accessibility needs, the Central Park Conservancy has shown that safety and rambunctiousness can still coexist.

Designed by Richard Dattner in 1972, Ancient Playground was one of 21 Robert Moses-era playgrounds installed around the park’s perimeter. In the late 1960s, these spaces began to be remade in the style of postwar Europe’s adventure playgrounds, where children molded their environments out of bricks, timber, and tires. Dattner themed his space on the Egyptian collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, just across a transverse road at West 84<sup>th</sup> Street. “I thought it would be wonderful to teach kids something of ancient construction—the pyramids, obelisks, mastabas, and so forth—and relate in a kids’ scale to what was across the street,” Dattner said.

The central challenge of the renovation—the fourth of Dattner’s playgrounds to be reconstructed in the park—was to create a required clear space around the main playground elements. Among other changes,

the conservancy’s designers created a regulation tire swing that mimics the original design, while increasing the size of Dattner’s tunnels for better visibility. Since sand is not considered an accessible surface material, designers used safety surfacing that matched the spirit of the original.

The second playground, at West 100<sup>th</sup> Street, took its adventure-style form in 1972 to designs by Ross, Ryan, Jacquette Architects. The curving bridge, climbing cone, and water-spray feature have been restored, with the addition of complementary new equipment and resilient carpeting. A tree house was built around several mature trees, which were sadly removed after suffering damage during the August 18 storm. (The tree house remains.)

These respectful restorations are the latest sign that, 40 years later, adventure play is back. “In the 1970s, adventure playgrounds pushed the limits of demanding, physical play,” said Christopher Nolan, the conservancy’s vice president for capital projects. “We’ve been able to preserve the innovations that those playgrounds represented.” The two spaces join other playgrounds of this style, like the Rockwell Group’s Imagination Playground in Lower Manhattan, due to open next year, with a kit of loose parts that kids can use under the supervision of “play associates.”

Dattner, who consulted pro bono on his playground’s redesign, regards this latest generation of play spaces with a certain bemusement. “Much of my knowledge of the value of play has really been from the observation of kids playing with junk in the gutter,” he said. “The two major materials are sand and water. The rest is extra.”

JEFF BYLES

Above: Ancient Playground; Below: West 100th Street Playground





**SOFT LANDING** continued from front page transportation system,” said Sanders, who besides being a designer is also a noted author and filmmaker. He had in mind the increase in ferries around New York City over the last decade, including commuter lines and Water Taxis, as well as facilities like the Water Taxi Beaches in Long Island City and the South Street Seaport.

All these developments are viewed with pleasure by the Quadricentennial Commission. Its solution is so-called “Quad Landings”: the initial design, from Huntley Gill of Guardia Architects, calls for simple, stationary barges secured to the riverbed by twin poles and connected to the shore by narrow gangways. Placed at intervals from Manhattan to Albany, the Quad Landings would give pleasure boats and ferries a new way to connect to riverfront communities along the Hudson. The commission has received an initial \$750,000 from the state to pursue the project, and is committed to footing 75 percent of the cost of constructing the landings (estimated at \$250,000 each) for qualified municipalities that agree to pay the remainder.

Sanders’ and Pentagram’s proposal dresses this concept up for a sophisticated urban audience. Riverways adds programming and a sense of event to the transmodal moment when the landlubber leaves shore, with an elevated plank that could play host

to elements like cafes and newsstands, while barge poles become standards for canvas panels that block out the elements. James Biber, who headed up Riverways for Pentagram, claims the project fulfills a need for active public space where water meets the land. “We were looking around for this kind of urban amenity, and it just doesn’t exist,” said Biber.

Sanders sets the cost of a single Riverways pavilion at slightly less than \$1 million, with a single “kit of parts” approach that could facilitate a variety of uses for each landing, from outdoor movie theater to floating swimming pool.

Neither group of designers will discuss efforts that may be afoot with ferry operators to make the landings a functional piece of infrastructure. President and CEO Tom Fox of Harbor Experience Companies, which owns the Circle Line Downtown and Water Taxi operations, had reservations about the concept, saying, “You can’t have the dock be the attraction—it has to provide access to the attraction.” For his part, Arthur Imperatore, president of New York Waterways, indicated in a statement that a project like Riverways could increase commuter traffic on the river: “Waterfront development provides the customers for successful ferry service,” he said. For now, however, the project remains, as Gill called it, “basically a labor of love.” **IAN VOLNER**



The coalition's plan extends north from Pier 35.

COURTESY OUR WATERFRONT

#### EAST RIVER RUCKUS

continued from front page between July and November 2008 and hosted three visioning sessions with 150 participants. The Hester Street Collaborative guided the group through design workshops, and the Pratt Center for Community and Economic Development analyzed the economics of the proposal that these workshops produced.

At a sparsely attended rally, OUR Waterfront leaders explained that a majority of neighbors in public sessions had called for free open space and venues for sports, and that many were worried about the East River waterfront offering instead more bars and restaurants.

The proposal argues that the city’s plan to develop piers 35, 36, and 42 on the stretch of East River waterfront north of the Manhattan Bridge shortchanges a neighborhood where nearly 85 percent of residents live

in rent-regulated buildings.

In fact, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has targeted the corner of South Street and the FDR Drive for a 55,000-square-foot home to Basketball City, the private concern for up-market leagues and special events.

The coalition proposes three alternatives, including a \$55 million scheme with public courts, a floating pool, open space, and a community center. Anne Frederick of the Hester Street Collaborative said the most realistic course entails some private use by Basketball City or another vendor.

At the presentation, Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez huddled with organizers before the event to promise “some money” toward the project cost and spoke forcefully about its rationale. “On the West Side, nobody would tell the community: You can have a nice park but it has to be self-

sustaining,” the congresswoman said. She proposed a meeting among “public officials, the community, and the EDC” to tweak the plans.

The coalition’s preferred plan would demolish all buildings and establish a range of recreation options, including a filtered “river pool” and ramps for putting in kayaks. A recreation center would host leagues, children’s supervised play, and games popular with older Chinatown residents.

As the presentation showed, the city’s promise of \$138 million in funds from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation has wavered since it released a plan in 2005: Pier 42 has no budget, the Pier 36 home for a gym needs structural repair, and Pier 35 has funds to create a “green wall” obscuring the maintenance shed that Basketball City would replace.

Basketball City’s representatives did not speak at the meeting, but the organization knows local politics, having discovered the East River spot after losing a perch on the Hudson River in the development of Chelsea Piers. It won the new site as part of the settlement of an unrelated lawsuit after answering a city request for proposals in 1996. Negotiations with the city will continue this month.

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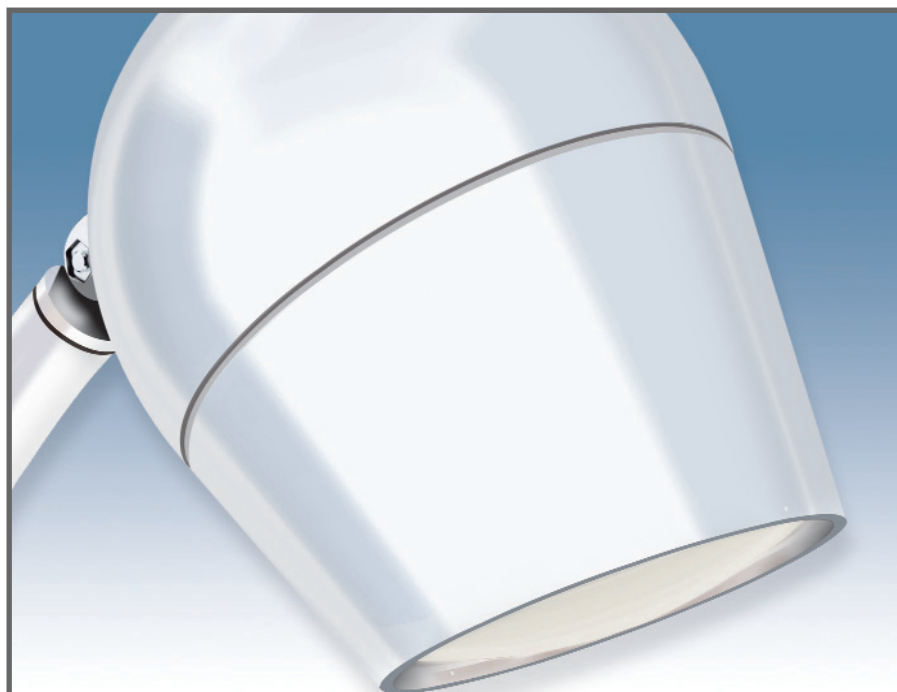
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER NOVEMBER 4, 2009

DC GETS FIRST STAND-ALONE BIKE HUB ON EAST COAST

# FREE WHEELIN'



Consider this paradox: The Washington, D.C. region has some of the nation's worst traffic—but according to the latest American Community Survey, it also has the sixth highest rate of bicycle commuting, with some 87,500 people relying on bikes as their primary means of transportation.

In early October, the D.C. govern-

ment took a big step forward when it opened the first publicly accessible, stand-alone bicycle storage and rental facility on the East Coast.

The \$4 million Bicycle Transit Center is neatly wedged on a traffic island between two Daniel Burnham masterpieces, the National Postal Museum and Union Station. The facility offers storage for 150 bikes,

changing rooms, and a rental and repair space. Riders can park their bikes at the facility for \$1 a day and have access between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; for \$100 a year, they get 24-hour access.

"I really see the bike station almost as a monument to bicycling and one that shows that bicycling is here to stay in D.C.," said Eric Gilliland,

executive director of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

Just as striking as its range of services is its design: The fritted glass walls are draped with tensioned 80-foot steel tubes, which bow outward from concrete bases at either end, drawing comparisons to half a football, a bicycle helmet, and Captain Nemo's submarine.

"The plan is somewhat dictated by traffic patterns, which gave us the need to taper it at the north end and the south, where we wanted to minimize sight lines," said Don Paine, principal at KGP Design Studio, which designed the center (80 percent of which was federally funded).

But aesthetics were important as well; the client required a design that was at once iconic but not intrusive to its Beaux-Arts surroundings. "It was important that we did something to complement the buildings," said James Sebastian, manager for the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. "We couldn't just have a shed."

The 1,700-square-foot facility is operated under a lease by Bikestation, a Long Beach, California-based firm. Bikestation also operates similar facilities in Seattle, Santa Barbara, Palo Alto, and Long Beach.

The station is part of a larger pro-cycling strategy for the region. There are already 40 miles of bike

lanes in Washington and over 100 miles of dedicated bike trails around the city, with another dedicated bike trail underway to link the Capitol Hill area with the Maryland suburbs. Washington is also planning to expand its SmartBike program, in which riders can rent bicycles from racks set up around the city.

Though it's too early for reliable statistics on usage at the transit center, Sebastian said he's been inundated with anecdotal success stories. "There's a lot of walk-up interest," he said. "I was there the other day and a family who didn't know anything about it came in, and by the time I left they had all rented bikes." **CLAY RISEN**



DON PAINE



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**TWICE AS SMELLY** continued from front page consent order compelling the city to come into compliance. But it was only this October that the mayor finally re-pledged the \$150 million originally promised.

By once again undertaking these improvements, the mayor hopes to stave off impending superfund designation that both he and some local businesses see as a threat to hoped-for development. "This is the beginning of a comprehensive cleanup that will be done much faster than three years of fighting through the Superfund process," he declared.

But the promised improvements to sewage overflow have nothing to do with the toxic sediments in the canal that led the EPA to consider it for listing in April. The city's own proposal to clean up those sediments has been questioned by environmentalists, scientists, and even the Army Corps of Engineers, the city's partner in the program.

Joshua Verleun, a staff attorney for the environmental group Riverkeeper, noted that major wastewater treatment projects are always good news, "but to lump it in with Superfund is misleading—they're two different things," he said. "Both from a legal perspective and an advocacy perspective, Superfund really is the best way to clean up the canal and it's what the people in the community want and deserve."

The mayor was steadfast in maintaining that his plan had more money and would be more efficient: "There is no Superfund, it's a misnomer." However, according to the EPA, its Superfund remediation budget is in excess of \$1 billion every year. Region 2, which covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, receives between \$80-\$100 million per year, and was closer to \$250 million this year thanks to stimulus funding.

By comparison, the city's plan counts on the Army Corps of Engineers to tap the Water Resource Development Act for funds to clean the canal, of which there is only \$50 million available each year for the entire country. The cleanup of the canal is expected to cost between \$250 million and \$400 million, making the mayor's nine- to ten-year estimate seem exceedingly optimistic.

The city's plan seeks to bring local stakeholders to the table to pay the cost of cleaning up after the pollution. Unlike Superfund,

which uses detailed investigations to identify responsible parties and compels them to pay for cleanup through legal means, the city's program would be voluntary. The city is hoping those local businesses and developers would help pay for the cleanup to avoid the supposed stigma of Superfund listing. "That's just bunk," said Craig Hammerman, district manager of local Community Board 6. "How can you stigmatize a stigmatized area? The cleanup will destigmatize it, though, and that's what we're after."

Overall, the arguments against Superfund status seem meager compared with the need to clean up the site. One of those arguments is that it would take too long. But Walter Mugdan, director of Superfund Programs for Region 2, points out that of the more than 1,000 Superfund sites to date, no more than one or two have involved lengthy litigation to clean up. Meanwhile, involving the Army Corps, as the city plans, could actually slow down the process by one or two years because the Corps would have to acquire permits for work that the EPA can do as of right. "I think the thing that's important with the EPA is the legal power, the legal authority, which the Corps doesn't have," said Mark Lulka, the Army Corps' project manager on Gowanus restoration, adding that the "Superfund is a known quantity. Do I think we can do the work? Yes. But it's never been done before."

The Bloomberg team was dealt a blow on October 16, when Nydia Velázquez, the area's congresswoman and a tireless supporter of the canal, announced her support for Superfund designation. "With nearly three decades of experience, the EPA has the expertise and resources to carry out a comprehensive remediation of these sites, creating a safe place for New Yorkers to live and work," Velázquez said in a statement.

For Richard Plunz, director of the Urban Design Lab at Columbia's Earth Institute, and who has done work on the Gowanus, the mayor's reasoning is clear. "I am not so familiar with the details of the NYC alternative plan," he wrote in an email. "But of course I understand that the city doesn't want to hinder real estate investment in the short term with a more cumbersome (but effective) Superfund cleanup. This game is obvious to all." **MC**



Members of the Gowanus Dredgers at the mayor's press conference.

MATT CHABAN

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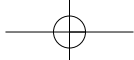
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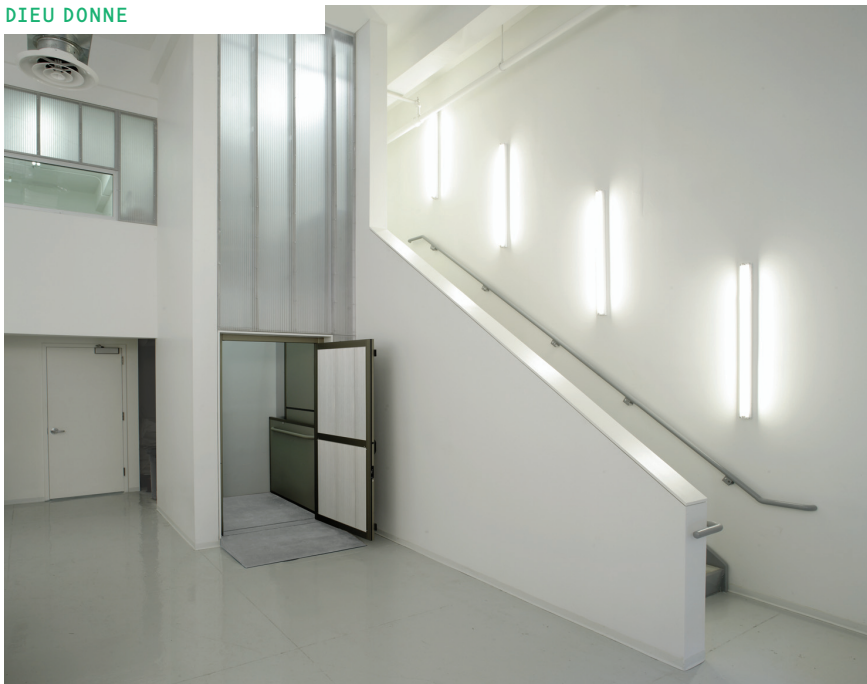




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PHOTOS: FRANK GUDMAN; RENDERINGS: COURTESY STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT

Before opening his office in 1995, Stephen Yablon worked in the offices of Gruzen Samton, I.M. Pei, and Gwathmey Siegel. While his modernist lineage is clearly visible in his work, Yablon is not a buttoned-up designer of austere boxes. “I wanted to work on my own terms,” he said. “I wanted to be able to try things on my own, succeed or fail.” He launched the firm without a project, and spent a year networking and building relationships, many of which he has since maintained through multiple commissions.

Two competition entries, both unbuilt, reveal a forward-looking sensibility. One, the first-place winner for a pavilion in Boston’s Harbor Park, calls for a glass cube with LED information screens suspended between a glazed double-skin. The other, a second-place entry for the headquarters of a real estate company in Northern England, called for a dramatically curved building clad in wooden louvers, to reduce heat gain and recall the surrounding forests.

Yablon’s ten-person firm uses simple forms in public projects with tight budgets, like the award-winning Betances Community Center in the Bronx, which presents a welcoming streetfront entrance to the public. On the light-filled interior, the precise detailing helps to elevate inexpensive materials and puts boxing at center stage. The firm was twice selected to participate in the Department of Design and Construction’s Excellence Program.

The firm’s Garment District offices are filled with mock-ups and material samples, testament to a design process that Yablon describes as “model-driven.” Yablon likes to experiment with light, texture, and surface, as well as text and images to reflect his clients’ identities, especially in office interiors projects. “Sometimes I do sketches, and other times I act as an editor,” he said. **AGB**

DIEU DONNE  
NEW YORK

This 7,000-square-foot project, for a Garment District nonprofit arts organization dedicated to promoting paper as a material for art, includes a narrow storefront gallery and a double-height workshop for production and collaborations with contemporary artists. The project includes wet and dry studios, as well as office, archive, and meeting spaces on a mezzanine level.

BETANCES  
COMMUNITY  
CENTER  
BRONX,  
NEW YORK

This 27,000-square-foot facility includes a gymnasium, boxing ring, meeting rooms, cafeteria, game rooms, and meeting and adult education spaces. Built by the New York City Housing Authority, the building is arranged around a three-story interior courtyard, housing the boxing gym with seating for 340. Light is admitted from three sides of the space, a fitting home for a well-known boxing program.

COLUMBIA  
CENTER FOR  
STUDENT  
ADVISING  
NEW YORK

Yablon’s firm devised a perforated metal entrance wall that creates varying degrees of reflectivity and transparency. The metal punches evoke Columbia’s iconic quadrangle pattern, reflecting the images of the students while admitting light and edited views to office spaces behind. Wood veneers and colorful furniture will help to make the space warm and inviting.

CENTRAL  
HARLEM STD  
CLINIC  
NEW YORK

Located in a landmarked McKim, Mead, and White building, this public clinic is meant to project optimism and a spa-like atmosphere. Indirect light washes the walls and ceiling, and natural light is admitted through a resin wall, embedded with beads, wire, and thread by women whose lives have been impacted by HIV. The project includes lobby, waiting areas, labs, and counseling rooms.

GUEST HOUSE  
PAVILION  
SULLIVAN’S  
ISLAND,  
SOUTH  
CAROLINA

This guest house combines low energy consumption with beautiful poolside views. Cooled primarily through natural ventilation, the pool-facing side is designed with operable louvers made of recycled old growth cypress. The opposite side is mostly opaque, with narrow slit windows allowing breezes through the narrow building. Raised on columns, the building provides shade for seating areas underneath.





Locker room



The lobby

footage remained constant.

A cheap and innovative lighting strategy amplifies the Y's playful vibe. In the fitness room, each color of flooring is paired with a different length of fluorescent lights directly overhead. The lobby is illuminated by a grid of off-the-shelf, circular fluorescent lights of varying diameters, with the smallest lights placed in the farthest corner. From the vantage point of the entrance, the result is a subtle optical illusion that elongates the lobby from end to end.

Because its membership is predominantly Jewish, the Y asked Zucker and Sperber to incorporate an East-meets-West theme that would reflect Jewish diversity. "One thing that's interesting about any Jewish community is its combination of ancient and modern sensibilities," said Stephen Hazan Arnoff, the Y's executive director. To reflect that blend, Zucker and Sperber accented the lobby's clean modern aesthetic with imported tiles emblazoned with a classic, geometric Middle Eastern star pattern.

Since construction began on June 13, the Y has remained open, attracting several hundred new members to their pre-existing base of 2,000. Seeing the lobby's new public spaces fill with people almost immediately after completion, Arnoff said, "You can almost say the building was backwards and we turned it around and made it right." **JE**

## DOWNTOWN Y FINDS ITS TRUE COLORS

# ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Before its renovation this fall, the 14<sup>th</sup> Street YMHA Jewish community center had literally turned its back to the community: Its first floor comprised a storefront blocked by offices and a lobby that was little more than a cramped hallway with a front desk facing away from the entrance. Stripes of drab green and yellow, the result of a bare-bones renovation in the mid-1990s, had left it feeling dreary and institutional.

When Z-A Studio and Studio ST

Architects teamed up to renovate the Y's fitness center and locker rooms last June, their original mandate was quickly co-opted by an overwhelming demand from the Y's staff and community leaders for a new lobby that could actually function as a public space. Completed last month, the final design relocates the main floor offices, triples the lobby's size from 550 to 1,700 square feet, adds copious seating and an art exhibition space, and opens up the

storefront to 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

The welcoming new lobby is the focal point of the firms' holistic \$1.2 million design strategy, which reorganized the Y's main floor as a series of programmatic "bands," said the architects, progressing deeper into the building: The lobby gives way to offices, which give way to the fitness center, then to the locker rooms, and finally to the pool. "As you move through the building you have to cut through all the different bands, to experience the multiplicity of the different spaces," said Guy Zucker, principal and founder of Z-A Studio.

Vibrant swaths of color partition

each area, serving as cues to different functions and defining spaces without adding physical barriers. In the lobby, dark blue tiles mark the lounge and light blue the cafe seating. In the fitness room, dark orange designates the weightlifting section; medium orange, the circulation area; and light orange, the cardiovascular machines. "It makes the space a little more interesting, since we were working with a simple rectilinear box," said Esther Sperber, principal and founder of Studio ST Architects. It's also practical; thanks to the reorganization, the fitness center now holds 25 percent more equipment even though its total square



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The museum's facade folds around interior program elements rather than just containing them in a box. After studying several options, the team settled on a system of triangular aluminum panels.

LEESER  
ARCHITECTURE,  
SCIAME

COURTESY LEESER ARCHITECTURE

The Museum of the Moving Image was the first institution in the United States to focus solely on the art and history of film, television, and video. Since it first opened in 1988, the institution has operated out of a landmarked 1920s building in Astoria Studios—the one-time base of Paramount Pictures' East Coast production facilities. While the history of the 45,000-square-foot structure, not to mention the long span spaces called for by its original program, made it a perfect home for the museum—an artifact in and of itself—by the mid-2000s the institution's attendance and collection had grown to the point that it was bursting at the seams. In desperate need of additional space, the museum hired Leeser Architecture to design a 37,000-square-foot expansion, renovate its existing interiors, and bring the whole project up to LEED Silver standards.

The expansion is sited along

the back of the existing building, between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> streets. The architects maintained the museum's existing entrance on 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue, but moved the lobby to the new building, inserting a 50-foot-long video wall that will lead visitors there from the door. Behind the expansion is a new courtyard, where the museum will screen movies in the summer. In addition to the lobby, the expansion houses a 264-seat theater with stadium seating, a smaller 68-seat screening room, an education center, a cafe, and exhibition spaces, not to mention a cellar with mechanical rooms.

While the existing building boasts a monolithic, poured-in-place concrete structure, the expansion was framed in steel. The material proved to be the most economic choice and easier to detail considering the relatively complicated section: The theater rakes through the second floor, and the gallery on that floor steps

down in elevation. A seismic joint separates the new and existing structures, and the architects inserted connection points between the two at all three levels and the cellar.

Inside and out, Leeser strove to give the museum a cutting-edge look. This desire drove the development of the expansion's facade system. Rather than sheath the volume in cladding that simply maxed out the zoning envelope, the architects decided to wrap the building in a skin that folds around the programmatic elements, expressing them on the exterior. They studied many options, finally arriving at a system of triangular solid plate aluminum panels separated by gutters made from aluminum extrusions. The triangular panels lent themselves most readily to the folding scheme, enabling the team to tailor the wall exactly around the volumes on the interior. Nine of these 5-foot-8-inch equilaterals join together to form larger triangles. The pattern is described by varying gutter widths: two-inch gutters separate the mega triangles, while half-inch gutters separate the individual panels. The gutters give the surface a sense of depth, holding the panels off of the insulation and accentuating their thinness. The panels themselves are coated with a very light blue high-gloss paint that lends the wall the luminosity of a movie screen.

Leeser worked out the wall's

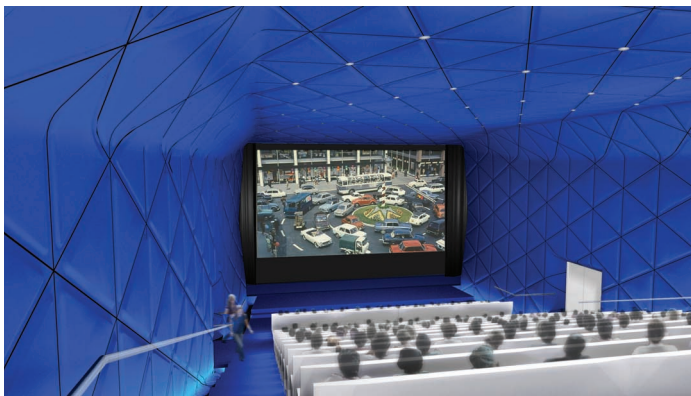
assembly with the project's construction manager, Sciame. It begins with a backup wall of light grade steel studs—the same that are used in many veneer curtain wall applications—that connect to the building's structure. The studs are covered with sheathing, a yellow drywall that provides the basis for water-proofing, which is spray-applied. A layer of insulation comes next, attached to the now watertight sheathing by a series of adjustable Z-clips. The Z-clips span the depth of the insulation and provide connection points for the gutter system. The gutters connect at each place where there are nodes in the triangular pattern—in other words, where the points of six triangles come together. Once the gutter system is up, the triangular panels simply clip into place. While gravity does most of the work, fixing screws provide additional mooring and allow the panels to be adjusted to account for construction tolerances.

The architects also added a new glass entry facade to the existing building, which serves as the museum's signage. The system is basically a customized storefront, but the team found a company in Germany capable of applying a silvered microfilm coating to the insulated glass units in a controlled way to spell out in negative the letters of the institution's name—most manufacturers can only apply micro-



films over entire lites of glass. In addition to letting the public know the name of the institution that the building houses, the reflective surface around the letters has a metaphorical significance: it creates a moving image of the people passing by on the street. At night, the letters, which are transparent, glow, telegraphing the name far and wide, or at least across the street.

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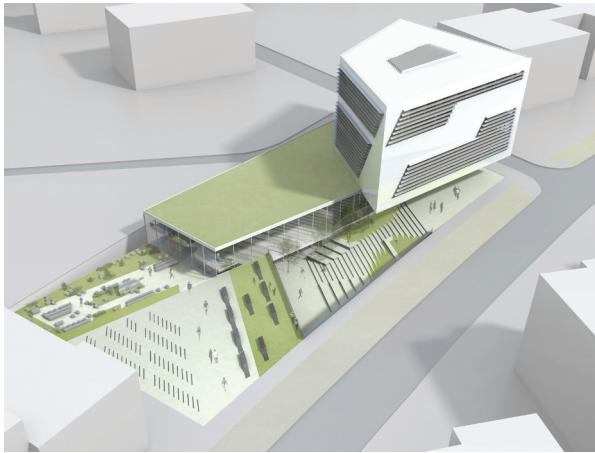
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER NOVEMBER 4, 2009



COURTESY STUDIO/MDA

## UNVEILED

### DAS KOMPETENZZENTRUM MOBILITÄT

Aachen, one of Germany's oldest college towns, recently held an international competition for the design of three new university facilities. One, an energy research lab, went to Zaha Hadid. Danish firm schmidt hammer lassen architects carried away a commission for an auditorium complex. And the third project, a center for studying mobility in everything from cars to spaceships, was won by New York City-based studioMDA. "What's great about this competition is that

they kept it open to get in little-known offices like us," said studioMDA founder Markus Dochantschi. "We submitted and got the first prize."

The program of the 50,000-square-foot facility includes two 350-seat lecture halls, a cafeteria, and classrooms and applied study labs for a variety of disciplines including electrical engineering, information technology, and aerospace. Part of the site had to be kept open to maintain a ventilation corridor for the city. Taking this zoning requirement as inspiration, studioMDA based the form of their design on wind study tests, winding up with a long, one-story podium topped at one end by a six-story box. The

podium houses a wide, open cafeteria that functions as a campus room, a place for students to meet and mingle. This space opens on to a piazza, a rarity for this urban campus. The first floor also contains the applied study labs, which open directly onto the street, making it easy to move machinery in and out. The architects placed the lecture halls below grade along with a parking garage.

The most technologically savvy part of the building is the six-story box, which houses the classrooms. studioMDA based their design of this volume on the stop-start technology found in many late-model German automobiles, in which the engine actually turns off every time the car comes to rest and then turns on again when you press the accelerator, thus saving gas. The architects clad the box with metal louvers that close when the room they shelter is not being used. The lights also turn off and the air conditioner goes on a lower cycle, all controlled by a central computer. **AS**

**Architect:** studioMDA  
**Client:** Aachen University of Applied Sciences  
**Location:** Aachen, Germany  
**Completion:** 2012

## AT DEADLINE

### MORE FINE FELLOWS

When he took office in 2006, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer launched an innovative program placing local planning students with the borough's 12 community boards. Having begun his political career as a teenage board member, Stringer knows that the primary purpose of the city's 59 boards is to rule on local projects and land-use issues, and yet none have a full- or even part-time planner on staff. Enter the planning students, who have been widely lauded for helping spearhead special projects, increase understanding on technical issues, and share advice. Now, two boards in Brooklyn have fellows, and on October 21, they joined Stringer and officials from the Bloomberg administration and Hunter College, which oversees the fellows, to announce the expansion of the program citywide next year.

### THE BOYS IN GREEN

When the new 121<sup>st</sup> Precinct Stationhouse opens in 2012, it will be the first "green" police station in the city, the first designed under the new sustainability standards set for all government buildings by Local Law 86 in 2005. But more notable, perhaps, for the Rafael Viñoly-designed station, which broke ground on October 22, is that it is the first built on Staten Island since 1962.

### SAARINEN MAKES THE GRADE

Like the United States, Britain has had a difficult relationship with its aging midcentury architecture. But unlike the U.S., Britain has done a far better job of saving such buildings, including the Eero Saarinen-designed U.S. Embassy in the Grosvenor Square section of London, which received Grade II listing on October 22. The move has angered local diplomats, however, as it makes the potential sale of the building—something the U.S. is counting on as it plans a new embassy south of the River Thames—all the more difficult.

### THE GRAND ONLINE CONCOURSE

The Bronx is not always known for its architecture, but the Lehman College Art Gallery is looking to change that with a new website called, simply enough, "Bronx Architecture." The site, which launched on October 20, includes some 75 buildings, from the familiar—Grand Concourse, Yankee Stadium—to the obscure—Williamsbridge Reservoir Keeper's House—as well as profiles of the architects behind them, guides to the 35 neighborhoods of the Bronx, maps, and walking tours. It is a site so thorough and well designed, it trumps anything the other four boroughs have to offer. Find it at [lehman.edu/architecture](http://lehman.edu/architecture).

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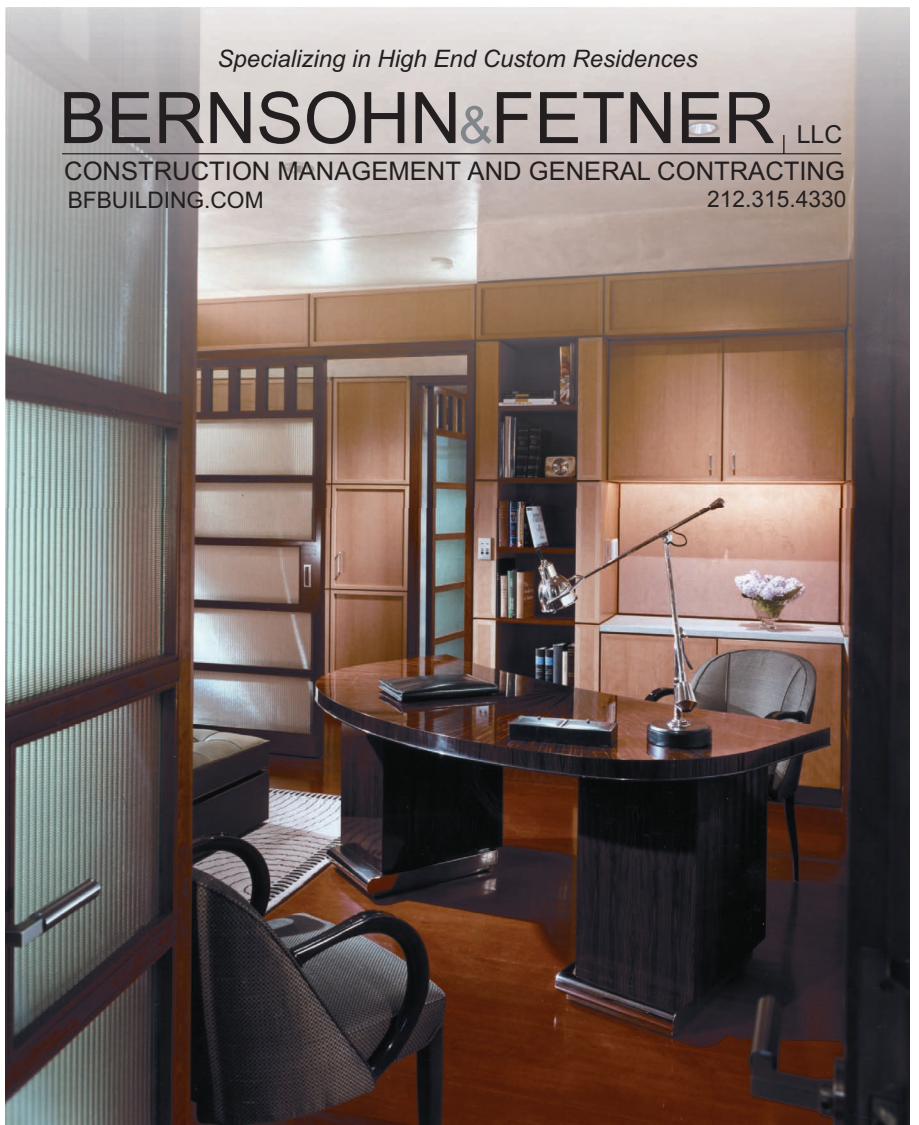
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# BACK TO THE LAND



EZRA STOLLER/ESTO

Often neglected, deemed passé, or in the way of development—and, sometimes, frankly a flop—America's modernist landscapes are under siege. But the movement to bring these pioneering works into the preservation fold is getting under way, and not a season too soon. **William L. Hamilton** talks to Charles Birnbaum, founder and president of the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and others about the uphill challenges.

Modern architecture has captured the public imagination, making fashionable magazine fodder of names like Paul Rudolph and Pierre Koenig, and spurring reverential awe toward masterpieces like the Mies van der Rohe–designed Farnsworth House and Philip Johnson's Glass House. But admirers of America's midcentury legacy may not be aware that across the nation, modernism's other great body of work is going to seed. In some cases, literally.

Recognizing and saving icons of landscape design will be modernism's next big battle, and the challenges are likely to be tougher than the rescue of buildings. Daniel Kiley, John Ormsbee Simonds, Hideo Sasaki, and Lawrence Halprin, who

passed away on October 25, are not the all-stars that Mies, Alvar, Eero, and I.M. are. And living, land-made designs, by nature more subject to the vagaries of change than the fixities of structure, are harder to defend and easier to destroy.

No one talked about knocking Eero Saarinen's Beaumont Theater flat during the recent rehabilitation of Lincoln Center, but its companion piece—Kiley's plaza, which offered theater-goers a sweeping stroll of London Plane trees and Schwedler maples—was sliced, diced, and decimated by half. There's a restaurant there now: Ca-ching.

"Our environment is our most complex and diverse, at times diffuse, cultural product," Laurie Olin, the landscape architect, told an audience at a landscape



**Facing page:**  
Deere & Company World  
Headquarters, 1959  
Sasaki Associates  
Moline, Illinois

**This page, right:**  
Ira Keller Fountain, 1970  
Lawrence Halprin  
Portland, Oregon

**Below:**  
Jefferson National Expansion  
Memorial Park, 1969–1973  
and 1979–1981  
Daniel Kiley  
St. Louis, Missouri

**Bottom:**  
Miller Garden, 1957  
Daniel Kiley  
Columbus, Indiana



KEN MCCOWN



CHARLES BIRNBAUM



EZRA STOLLER/ESTO

preservation symposium at the New York Botanical Garden last month. “Some parts are splendid, and some terrible. Knowing the difference matters.”

The event was sponsored by the Cultural Landscape Foundation, an 11-year-old, Washington-based organization whose mission has been to bring the issues and importance of America’s created landscapes to public notice, and in the process help protect the field’s achievements through preservation. Charles Birnbaum, the group’s founder and president, calls it “stewardship through education.”

Birnbaum, who delivers a passionate, well-reasoned message, also strikes the tone of a man for whom fires are breaking out everywhere. In a recent conversation, examples of critical landscape situations leapt out as he talked: the renovation of Washington Square Park in New York; the Cranbrook Academy campus in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; and the Emerald Necklace greenway in Boston. Of the National Register of Historic Places’ approximately 80,000 nominations, 2,180 have identified landscape architecture as an area of significance. “Architecture is often designated,” Birnbaum said of a project’s recognition. “Landscape is not. We need to elevate the value of those places.”

Political to the core, Birnbaum travels incessantly, speaks with instant authority, and acts in person like a juggler who understands that if he doesn’t keep the balls in the air, they’ll hit the ground. Despite 35 years of promoting the idea, acceptance of landscape preservation—in a nation that still believes there are frontiers, somewhere—is far from secure.

Since its inception in 1998, the foundation has become the most visible ally for preservation efforts across the country. Primarily using the medium of its ambitious website—along with an expanding roster of books, an awards program, and symposia like the one held at the Botanical Garden—the foundation continues to proselytize for landscapes, rally support among stakeholders, and provide technical assistance to other advocacy groups. These efforts include a video oral-history series—including a recent interview with distinguished designer M. Paul Friedberg—and an annual list of sites at risk, “Landslides,” launched in 2002, that has become a widely cited wake-up call for landscape aficionados.

On last year’s list was Parkmerced in San Francisco, a large-scale, World War II-era residential community landscaped by 20<sup>th</sup>-century A-listers Thomas Church and Robert Royston. Hoping to expand and update it,

the complex’s newest owners called in Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to redesign Parkmerced, and in the process touched off a tug-of-war typical of aging landscapes under threat from new development. Craig Hartman, the respected SOM architect leading the project, has acknowledged the historical importance of its designs, but current plans to raze and revamp some 116 acres of Church’s distinctive, pie-shaped blocks and carefully planted grounds have, the foundation reported, made “even the seasoned professionals gasp.”

The legacy of modern landscapes is particularly complex. There are uncontested masterworks like Dan Kiley’s garden for Joseph Irwin Miller in Columbus, Indiana (Eero Saarinen and Kevin Roche did the house, Alexander Girard the interiors), and a superb corporate picturesque, like the 1,400-acre park for the John Deere headquarters in Moline, Illinois, designed by Stu Dawson of Sasaki Associates. But that legacy also includes failed pedestrian malls and public plazas of the age of urban renewal, often designed by the very heroes the foundation and fellow preservationists aim to celebrate.

“We get that all the time,” said Christine Madrid French, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s new director of the Modernism and Recent Past Program, of unsympathetic reaction to contemporary landscape preservation. “It’s still a hard sell.” French works with Birnbaum, who advises the Trust. Her newest worry is not outdoor malls like the Lawrence Halprin design for Charlottesville, Virginia’s Main Street—a notorious mid-’70s flop that killed businesses downtown and was finally righted 30 years later by a renovation that Halprin complained about—but the original wave of indoor malls, which French called “endangered.”

Landscape, distinct from architecture, has its own set of preservation difficulties. Maintenance costs can be inordinately high for municipalities; liability can plague them too. In 2004, four people drowned in the steeply terraced Active Pool at Fort Worth Water Gardens Park, designed by Philip Johnson and John Burgee, when a child fell in and three people, including her father and brother, tried to save her. Suction pumps recycling its cascading waterfalls pulled them under. The pool was closed and reopened three years later, its depth changed from nine to two feet and warning signs posted to prohibit swimming.

Facing troubled public spaces, some cities have scrubbed the slate clean again rather than renovate or revive. In 2003, Denver scrapped Skyline Park,





JOE MABEL



BETH MEYER



JOE LEVICKAS





TON FOX



COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



JOE MABEL

**Facing page, above:**  
Freeway Park, 1970–1974  
Lawrence Halprin  
Seattle, Washington

**Facing page, below left:**  
Heritage Plaza, 1977  
Lawrence Halprin  
Fort Worth, Texas

**Facing page, below right:**  
Lake Elizabeth, 1967  
Simonds & Simonds  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**This page, top left:**  
Parkmerced, 1940–1951  
Thomas Church with Robert Royston  
San Francisco, California

**Above:**  
Gas Works Park, 1971–1988  
Richard Haag  
Seattle, Washington

**Top right:**  
Pershing Park, 1979  
M. Paul Friedberg and Partners  
Washington, D.C.

another Halprin design—an act Birnbaum likened to the destruction of New York’s Pennsylvania Station. The park’s three-block-long, canyon-like promenade carved a much-needed ribbon of open space into the city’s downtown when it opened in 1973. Three decades later, its fountains dry and trash-strewn, its grass replaced with wood chips, the site was turned over to Thomas Balsley Associates for a redo.

Even relatively successful spaces can meet indifference, like the lack of regard for Kiley’s design at Lincoln Center. Similarly, at the Kimball Museum in Fort Worth, there is talk of development in the spacious setting that surrounds the Louis Kahn building, Birnbaum said. In an arts-administrative age of “programming,” where everything must be a visitation magnet of some kind, contemplative spaces like the Kimball’s green outdoor “galleries” of lawn, hedge, tree canopy, skylight, and shade could become an institutional extravagance. Even Frederick Law Olmsted—landscape’s *Our Lord the Father*—is under siege in Rochester, New York, where there is talk of new building in the Olmsted-designed park system.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation is not alone in its work. In addition to the National Trust, others like the Garden Conservancy in Cold Spring, New York have lobbied for sites including the prison gardens on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay—a revelatory cultural landscape in its own right—and the Chase Garden in Orting, Washington, considered a landmark of modernist garden design in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the Library of American Landscape History in Amherst, Massachusetts is a strong advocate, with publications and touring exhibitions.

Landscape preservation is still relatively new, and scholarship on landscape design recent. As Laurie

Olin told the audience at the New York Botanical Garden, when he started college at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1956, he had never heard of landscape architecture. When he got interested in it, there were few books his teacher, Richard Haag, could direct him to in the school’s library. “The story of the history of America’s built environment was all around us and almost completely unwritten,” he said.

Now, with cocktail-party talk about “infrastructure,” and television series and books like Ken Burns’ dramatization of the creation of the National Park system, much has changed. The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s definition of what constitutes a defensible landscape now includes cemeteries, industrial sites, farmlands, and college campuses, in addition to the estates, parks, and public plazas that galvanized its first round of awareness.

It was Haag, in fact, who helped write a prescient chapter in recent landscape history with his design of Gas Works Park in Seattle, opened to the public in 1975. The park and its buildings—a Seattle Gas Light Company plant that ceased production decades earlier—were a pioneering example of brownfield reclamation and recreational reuse of an industrial site. With “cleaning and greening” that included bio-phyto-remediation and a coat of bright paint, the plant’s exhausters-compressors became play barns, while boiler houses became picnic groves.

At the High Line in New York, rusted railway tracks again prove transporting, but this time to destinations inconceivable when they were laid. Such successes of landscape design, unarguably popular, appropriate to the past and pertinent to the future, may be the most eloquent voices in the debate of what to cherish culturally, why, and how.

**WILLIAM L. HAMILTON IS A NEW YORK-BASED JOURNALIST WHO WRITES ON LANDSCAPE AND DESIGN.**



NOVEMBER

WEDNESDAY 4

LECTURES

**Minsuk Cho**  
**Mass Studies**  
6:30 p.m.  
Columbia GSAPP  
Wood Auditorium  
Avery Hall  
www.arch.columbia.edu

**Bill Higgins,**  
**Margery Perlmutter,**  
**Harry Kendall,**  
**and Rick Cook**  
**Roundtable Discussion on**  
**“Appropriateness”**  
6:00 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**Timothy Husband**  
**The Art of Illumination:**  
**The Limbourg Brothers and**  
**the “Belles Heures” of**  
**Jean de France, Duc de Berry**  
6:00 p.m.  
Bard Graduate Center  
Lecture Hall  
38 West 86th St.  
www.bgc.bard.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Krzysztof Wodiczko**  
**The Veterans Project**  
Institute of Contemporary Art  
100 Northern Ave.  
Boston  
www.icaboston.org

**Bits ‘n Pieces**  
Material ConneXion  
60 Madison Ave.  
www.materialconnexion.com

EVENT

**ADC Cube Party**  
6:00 p.m.  
Art Directors Club Gallery  
106 West 29th St.  
www.adcglobal.org

THURSDAY 5

LECTURES

**Ingrid Abramovitch**  
**Restoring a House in the City**  
6:30 p.m.  
Cooper-Hewitt,  
National Design Museum  
2 East 91st St.  
www.cooperhewitt.org

**Carlin Wing**  
6:00 p.m.  
Carpenter Center for  
the Visual Arts  
24 Quincy St., Cambridge  
www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/  
ccva.html

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Dan Flavin**  
**Series and Progressions**  
David Zwirner Gallery  
519 West 19th St.  
www.davidzwirner.com

**Kristin Baker**  
**Splitting Twilight**  
Deitch Projects  
18 Wooster St.  
www.deitch.com

FRIDAY 6

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Roni Horn aka Roni Horn**  
Whitney Museum of  
American Art  
945 Madison Ave.  
www.whitney.org

SATURDAY 7

SYMPOSIUM

**Arrested Development:**  
**Do Megaprojects**  
**Have a Future?**  
9:30 a.m.  
The Cooper Union Great Hall  
7 East 7th St.  
www.ifud.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Sun Xun**  
Max Protetch Gallery  
511 West 22nd St.  
www.maxprotetch.com

WITH THE KIDS

**Urs Fischer:**  
**Mesmerizing Environments**  
10:00 a.m.  
New Museum  
235 Bowery  
www.newmuseum.org

SUNDAY 8

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Bauhaus 1919–1933:**  
**Workshops for Modernity**  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

MONDAY 9

LECTURES

**Alan Berger,**  
**Kenneth Frampton,**  
**and Mahadev Raman**  
**After BIGness:**  
**Buffalo/Brooklyn—Designing**  
**for Post Crisis Cities**  
6:30 p.m.  
Columbia GSAPP  
Wood Auditorium  
Avery Hall  
www.arch.columbia.edu

**Tod Williams**  
**and Billie Tsien**  
**Barnes Foundation Design**  
**Presentation**  
7:00 p.m.  
The Cooper Union Great Hall  
7 East 7th St.  
www.archleague.org

**Camilo Jose Vergara**  
**Storefront Churches**  
6:30 p.m.  
National Building Museum  
401 F St. NW,  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nbm.org

EVENT

**The Type Is Right**  
6:30 p.m.  
Galapagos Art Space  
16 Main Street  
Brooklyn  
www.aigany.org

TUESDAY 10

LECTURES

**Vittorio Lampugnani**  
**Towards a New Discipline of**  
**Urban Design**  
6:30 p.m.  
Harvard Graduate  
School of Design  
48 Quincy St., Cambridge  
www.gsd.harvard.edu

**William F. Baker**  
**and Ross Wimer**  
**SOM in Shanghai:**  
**Jin Mao and Beyond**  
6:30 p.m.  
The William and Anita  
Newman Vertical Campus  
Baruch College  
55 Lexington Ave.  
www.skyscraper.org

**Novella Carpenter**  
**Farm City:**  
**The Education of an**  
**Urban Farmer**  
6:00 p.m.  
Horticultural Society of  
New York  
148 West 37th St.  
www.hsnyc.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Eero Saarinen:**  
**Shaping the Future**  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

THURSDAY 12

LECTURES

**Henry Petroski**  
**Success and Failure in Design**  
6:30 p.m.  
National Building Museum  
401 F St. NW  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nbm.org

Alison Knowles

6:00 p.m.  
Carpenter Center for the  
Visual Arts  
24 Quincy St., Cambridge  
www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/  
ccva.html

Yinka Shonibare

**Meet the Artist**  
7:00 p.m.  
Hirshhorn Museum  
Independence Ave. and  
7th St., Washington, D.C.  
www.hirshhorn.si.edu

**Andrew Delbanco**  
**Melville in New York**  
6:00 p.m.  
Bard Graduate Center  
18 West 86th St.  
www.bgc.bard.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Kimberley Hart**  
**Scout**  
Mixed Greens  
531 West 26th St.  
www.mixedgreens.com

EVENTS

**5 Dutch Days Kick Off with**  
**Brooklyn Borough President**  
**Marty Markowitz**  
6:00 p.m.  
Brooklyn Borough Hall  
209 Joralemon St.  
www.brooklynhistory.org

**Brand van Egmond**  
**“Lighting Sculptures”**  
**Book Launch**  
6:00 p.m.  
Trespa Design Centre  
62 Greene St.  
www.trespa.com

FRIDAY 13

CONFERENCE

**Architect's Journeys**  
12:30 p.m.  
Columbia GSAPP  
Wood Auditorium  
Avery Hall  
www.arch.columbia.edu

EVENT

**Breaking Ground:**  
**A Public Charrette**  
10:00 a.m.  
Federal Hall National  
Memorial  
26 Wall St.  
www.dancinginthestreets.org

SATURDAY 14

WITH THE KIDS

**Cast Iron Architecture in**  
**Soho**  
1:00 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**Snakes and Ladders**  
2:00 p.m.  
Rubin Museum of Art  
150 West 17th St.  
www.rmanyc.org

SUNDAY 15

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Alias Man Ray:**  
**The Art of Reinvention**  
Jewish Museum  
1109 5th Ave.  
www.thejewishmuseum.org

MONDAY 16

LECTURES

**Illustrated Lecture with**  
**Mitchell Owens**  
6:30 p.m.  
The Church of the  
Resurrection  
115 East 74th St.  
www.classicist.org

**Gordon Hood and**  
**Neil MacFarquhar**  
**New Universities in Libya**  
6:30 p.m.  
NYU Abu Dhabi/NYC  
19 Washington Square North  
nyuad.nyu.edu

TUESDAY 17

LECTURE

**Flavia Alaya**  
**and David Soo**  
**Paterson's Industrial History**  
**and the Newest National**  
**Park: The Making of a**  
**Monument to Making**  
6:30 p.m.  
General Society of Mechanics  
and Tradesmen  
20 West 44th St.  
www.generalsociety.org

SYMPOSIUM

**Barry Bergdoll,**  
**K. Michael Hays,**  
**and Diane Lewis**  
**The Return of Nature:**  
**The Sublime Plan**  
6:30 p.m.  
Harvard Graduate  
School of Design  
48 Quincy St., Cambridge  
www.gsd.harvard.edu

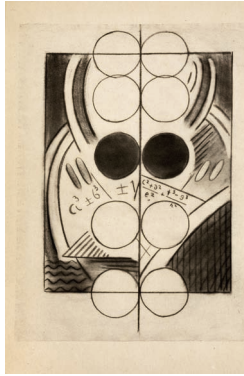
EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Sounding the Pacific:**  
**Musical Instruments of**  
**Oceania**  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1000 5th Ave.  
www.metmuseum.org

**Only in New York:**  
**Photographs from**  
**LOOK Magazine**  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

EVENT

**Visionaries! 2009**  
**Celebrating Rochelle Lazarus,**  
**Eva Zeisel and Barbara Tober**  
7:00 p.m.  
Museum of Arts and Design  
2 Columbus Circle  
www.madmuseum.org



COURTESY SMITHSONIAN/ARS; RIGHT: JASON MANDELLA

NEXUS NEW YORK: LATIN/AMERICAN ARTISTS IN THE MODERN METROPOLIS

El Museo del Barrio  
1230 5th Avenue  
Through February 28, 2010

*Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis*, the ambitious inaugural exhibit in El Museo del Barrio's new home, looks back at the heydays of American realism, expressionism, cubism, and Dada, discovering a vibrant Latin American presence. Carefully chosen pairings among over 200 works of art reveal a rich dialogue among Latin American artists in New York City in the first half of the 20th century. For instance, there's Marius de Zayas, whose mathematical symbolism in works like *Alfred Stieglitz* (1914, above right) fed the mechanical obsessions of Francis Picabia in *Ici, C'est Ici Stieglitz, Foi et Amour* (1915, above left). Exchanges between American and Latin modernists left their mark on both groups. Abstract expressionists such as Adolph Gottlieb, for instance, owe much to Uruguayan painter Joaquin Torres-Garcia and his blocky, stylized "constructivist" paintings, a debt that becomes obvious when the curators hang the two men's work side by side. Artistic inspiration flowed in both directions; the gritty Ashcan realism flourishing in New York inspired painter Celeste Woss y Gil's choice of tobacco vendors and nude black and mulatto women as subjects, a radical break from tradition in her native Dominican Republic. An accompanying collection of period photographs, poems, letters, original magazines, and books helps track the ongoing conversation among Latin and American artists and its role in forging the avant-garde movement in the United States.



JOHN GERRARD

JOHN GERRARD  
DIRECTIONS

Hirshhorn Museum  
Independence Avenue and 7th Street, Washington, D.C.  
Through May 31, 2010

Irish-born artist John Gerrard's keen eye captures bleak and arresting vistas in the rural American landscape, but the photographs that result are only the beginning of his creative process. In the Hirshhorn Museum's *Directions*, a reprise of Gerrard's acclaimed show at this year's Venice Biennale, the artist uses 3-D game design software to spin the static images into monumental, animated scenes that unfold in real time before the viewer's eyes. In *Sentry (Kit Carson, Colorado)* (2009, above), a lone red derrick repeatedly stoops to extract oil from the ground, with the play of light programmed precisely according to the actual positions of the sun and earth in any given moment. Elsewhere, Gerrard's extrapolation is less deterministic and more random, as in *Dust Storm (Dalhart, Texas)* (2007) a digital reconstruction of a 1935 photograph of "Black Sunday." Within a hyperreal landscape synthesized from hundreds of the artist's own photos of a ten-square-mile patch outside of Dalhart, Texas, a virtual dust storm roils in an unpredictable and constantly fluctuating pattern. Each of Gerrard's visions stands readily on its own, but together they compose a quietly powerful commentary on the combative relationship between America's land and the society that strives to exploit it.





SOCAR Oil Fields #3, Azerbaijan (2006).

## A TERRIBLE BEAUTY

**Edward Burtynsky: Oil**  
Hasted Hunt Kraeutler  
537 West 24th Street  
Through November 28

Corcoran Gallery of Art  
500 Seventeenth Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.  
Through December 13

Catalogue: Steidl, \$128.00

The extraction of natural resources takes a massive toll on the landscape, and in the hands of Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky, makes for gorgeous and haunting photographs. *Oil*, the name of a large catalogue and exhibition at Washington, D.C.'s Corcoran Gallery and a small show at Hasted Hunt Kraeutler Gallery in Chelsea, includes images of drills, pumps, cars, planes, ribbons of highway, and the seemingly endless field of low-rise buildings that comprise Los Angeles. Taken individually, many of these photographs, shot with a Hasselblad 39 megapixel for aerials or a Linhof Technika for landscapes, are achingly beautiful. Collectively, they document humanity's vast and troubling hunger for energy and the unrelenting consumption of the landscape necessary to feed it.

Free of didactic wall texts, the Chelsea exhibition showcases Burtynsky's more artful and abstract compositions. He has said that he wants his work to elicit feelings of attraction and repulsion in the viewer. With the exception of the dispiriting aerial photograph of Los Angeles, with a massive cloverleaf in its center and its sea of anonymous structures, most of the images in the Chelsea show attract the eye. **continued on page 24**

COURTESY HASTED HUNT KRAEUTLER/NICHOLAS METVIER GALLERY

## The Price of Fitting In

**Context/Contrast: New Architecture in Historic Districts, 1967–2009**  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Place  
Through January 23, 2010

The title of the AIAANY's exhibition on new architecture in historic districts, *Context/Contrast*, suggests opposition between two approaches to preservation. So does the wall quote from Brooklyn Heights preservation advocate Otis Pratt Pearsall: "I do not subscribe to the idea that any building that is not offensive is appropriate." This exhibition is intended to showcase the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission since 1965, and "to ask how the Commission's charge of ensuring 'appropriate' new architecture...has allowed neighborhoods to evolve without endangering [their] essential character." But to travel through time in New York's first historic district, Brooklyn Heights, along with four other districts, is to course through changing

fashions in preservation, from high contrast to contextual invisibility, from tweaking tradition to adopting only its base material. There's an incredibly motley assortment of responses to that charge, as the commission, architecture, and the definition of "appropriateness" have all changed over time.

To be able to survey the field, and to try to decide for yourself which approach works where, is a terrific opportunity. I only wish this exhibition had embraced its inherently controversial nature instead of trying to smooth it over. The projects presented are all described as successes (with a few rough drafts shown as failures), but there's no sense of self-analysis or of irony. That's not the way of AIAANY or of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, both exhibit sponsors, despite the fact that preservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has so many ironies to explore. Don't expect to find them here. Tucked into the stairwell, for example, is a placard telling the tale of Marcel Breuer's proposed tower over Grand Central and the 1978 Supreme Court decision that saved the station. No reference is made either to the destruction of the original Penn Station in 1963, or (more fun) to all the architects who have

failed to build towers over Breuer's own Whitney.

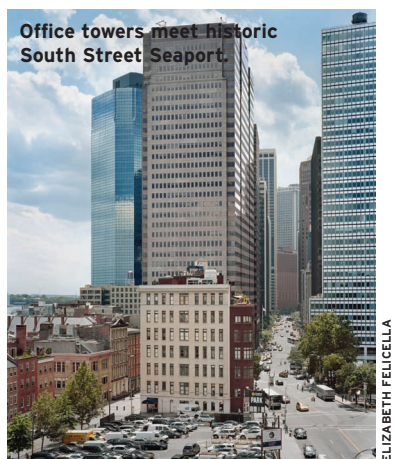
*Context/Contrast* is divided into five sections, each one focused on a different district. Brooklyn Heights and the Upper East Side start the show on the Center for Architecture's first floor. South Street Seaport, Douglaston, and Soho are sequestered downstairs. A shelf running along the wall above waist height holds photographs, renderings, and plans. Blow-up images of each neighborhood paper the walls, nicely setting the scene. The handsome design is by Moorhead & Moorhead (exhibition) and PS New York (graphics). Starting with the oldies allows the show to put on a happy, noncontroversial face: No failures are shown here; each architect's approach, by and large, is rigorously contextual. When you look at the image of Platt Byard Dovell's 47 East 91<sup>st</sup> Street (the building Woody Allen railed against) it is hard to tell what there could be considered new. There are contemporary articles about the projects (some negative) in binders for your perusal, but they aren't integrated into the show.

You won't have a problem spotting the new in the Soho section. Jean Nouvel and Aldo Rossi, these



Scholastic Building (2001) in Soho.

are architects of contrast worth arguing about. Next to Soho is a sort of grab-bag wall of other projects of interest under the rubric "The Architecture of Appropriateness," and these too include way more contemporary reinterpretations than most of the work more promi-



Office towers meet historic South Street Seaport.

ELIZABETH FELICELLA

nently featured, as if curator Rachel Carley realized too late that things were looking traditional. In the Soho section, former Landmarks Commissioner and current Polshek partner Richard Olcott asks, "Which strategy do you think is most appropriate for designing in historic districts: mimicry, contrast or interpretation?" While *Context/Contrast* is an excellent survey, I wish it more explicitly took up his question, and opened the commission's decisions to discussion rather than affirming their wisdom.

**ALEXANDRA LANGE IS AN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN CRITIC WHO BLOGS AT ABITLATE.TUMBLR.COM.**



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER NOVEMBER 4, 2009

## TSCHUMI PÈRE

Jean Tschumi: *Architecture at Full Scale*  
 Jacques Gubler  
 Skira, \$85.00

The child is the father to the man, said Wordsworth, tracing the mysterious balance of invention and inheritance in the formation of character. This principle applies to *Architecture at Full Scale*, the handsome new monograph by Jacques Gubler about the brief but bright architectural career of Jean Tschumi (1904–1962), whose name is today familiar through that of his son, sometime starchitect Bernard Tschumi. “My father died on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday,” Tschumi *fil*s touchingly writes in the foreword. He describes the book as “a detective story, in which carefully laid-out clues lead us to another, fuller understanding of what architecture can be.” The tacit mystery is the familial prehistory of Bernard Tschumi’s own epochal work as part of the so-called Deconstructivist moment in architecture. As with many early modernists, the explicit mystery is the striking transformation, in Tschumi’s career, from the moderne classicism of early works to the urbane modernism of a short generation later.

The masterwork of that career is the 1956–1960 headquarters for Swiss food conglomerate Nestlé at Vevey, Switzerland. A swooping Y-plan (reminiscent of the contemporary UNESCO complex in Paris by Marcel Breuer and others) preserves old-growth cypresses and ingeniously reoccupies the land parcels of a demolished hotel on the site. Glass and aluminum curtain walls above angular reinforced concrete pilotis neatly assimilate what could have been dissonant Miesian and Corbusian influences. A swooping folded aluminum entrance porch and bravura double-helix lobby staircase recall Eero Saarinen’s similarly scintillating spiral stair and canopies at the 1956 General Motors campus in Warren, Michigan. The tessellated folds of the lobby ceiling, its lines paralleled in the floor pattern below, translate the sectional tilts of the pilotis deep into the plan: Viewed obliquely, albeit somewhat willfully, these intricately disciplined disjunctions between orthogonal and diagonal geometries evoke the interests later developed by Tschumi the Younger.

The Vevey complex for Nestlé, along with the similar MVA Insurance building in

Grain Silo, Renens, Switzerland (1956–1959).



Lausanne, Switzerland came late in a career that was, like Saarinen’s, sadly abbreviated. One of the detective mysteries of the book is what might have been. But to present-day readers, Jean Tschumi’s career has the virtue of unfamiliarity. Unlike the all-too-polished tales of the usual midcentury suspects, the arc of Tschumi’s work from the early 1920s to the late 1950s illuminates a complicated confluence of forces and feints as a generation of designers attempted to reconcile Beaux-Arts training with modern times—and get work. Much as the life of a working character actor tells you more about Hollywood than the narrow trajectory of a leading man, *Architecture*

*at Full Scale* shows us how the dazzling changes of those turbulent times filtered out from a narrow avant-garde into the deep reserve of the profession.

Like those of Aalto or Asplund, Tschumi’s early projects featured a picturesquely streamlined classicism, which reached its fullest expression in his piquant Nestlé corporate pavilion at the 1937 Paris World’s Fair. Interior design work, also in Paris, saw detours into decorously moderne styling, as with a sleekly Chareau-esque 1933 office suite for manufacturer Edgar Brandt, and an unrealized boardroom for André Citroën. An association with art deco furniture maestro

Tschumi in 1960.



Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann led to a 1934 commission to design staterooms on the ocean liner *Normandie*. The dapper built-ins and boudoirs that resulted were worthy of Astaire and Rogers. Tschumi’s Perret-like 1949 Sandoz industrial laboratory in Orléans, France tops a modern ferroconcrete facade with a vast quasi-Doric cornice: The interestingly awkward result speaks to what history-in-progress looks like, before the historians tidy it up.

Gubler’s history is clearly a labor of love, as much a digressive diary of his own encounters with Tschumi’s legacy as a critical survey. An index would help scholars, as would an expanded narrative situating Tschumi’s work beyond the internecine complexities of a very local Franco-Swiss design scene. An interesting appendix discusses the relentless pedagogy of the Paris École des Beaux-Arts sequence, and Tschumi’s modernizing of his experience therein as a founding teacher at the Polytechnic School of the University of Lausanne (EPUL). “I could wish my days to be bound each to each,” Wordsworth wrote a few lines after his familiar aphorism on child and father, expressing the hope that life could proceed with all the predictable continuity of, say, semesters. Or of mere genealogy. Jean Tschumi’s story, in Gubler’s telling, is stranger and stronger: a case study in resolving the unpredictable inventions and inversions of one’s times into work both orderly and supple.

**CRITIC THOMAS DE MONCHAUX IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.**

**A TERRIBLE BEAUTY** continued from page 23 Light and sky have a milky quality in many of his photographs, so that the spidery black silhouettes of pumps and cables stand out against the horizon and reflect over a glassy pond like an army of Giacomettis stalking across the landscape. A grid of hundreds of Volkswagens, seen on a diagonal, looks like minimalist sculpture. Most editions of the photos on the exhibition list were marked “sold out.”

The Chelsea show of 17 images is only a hint of the breadth of Burtynsky’s project. The Corcoran exhibition and catalogue include over 200

photographs. This total view is much more grim. The vastness and variety of these places is overwhelming. Many of the photographs are decidedly messier than those in Chelsea, including a quilt-like grid of crushed cars, rolling hills made of worn-out tires, dozens of old plane fuselages, and a glowing jumble of names from a highway strip: Sunoco, Taco Bell, Denny’s, Exxon. This last image is included in a section called “Transportation and Auto Culture,” the least interesting visually and the most politically pointed. Most of the images are American. Crowds at the Talladega

Speedway and a trucker rally in Iowa creep into view, but the people are anonymous, seen from a distance.

The next section, called “The End of Oil,” includes decommissioned tankers cut into huge rusty pieces and murky pools of crude. Portraits of workers standing by enormous tanker hunks and pits of crude, both in Bangladesh, signal a shift from an Andreas Gursky-esque objectivity to the social documentary approach of Sebastião Salgado. These individuals stand with dignity, one man with a touch of amusement on his face. We are not meant to pity these workers. But we

are meant to see them. The everyday landscapes of the First World, and of North America in particular, are made possible at an enormous environmental cost in places often never even imagined by most American SUV drivers or subdivision developers. In these portraits, Burtynsky subtly personalizes these landscapes at the end of the production process.

This is an environmental message we have heard before. But Burtynsky succeeds in making us see the connections between seemingly disconnected landscapes and across the means of pro-



SOCAR Oil Fields #6, Azerbaijan (2006).

duction and consumption, from gleaming pipelines snaking across green expanses of Alberta to offshore platforms in Azerbaijan. The complexities of untangling

our interdependence on petroleum are daunting. Burtynsky shows us the urgency of taking up that task.

**ALAN G. BRAKE IS THE MIDWEST EDITOR AT AN.**

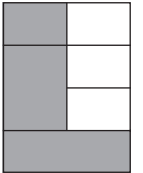
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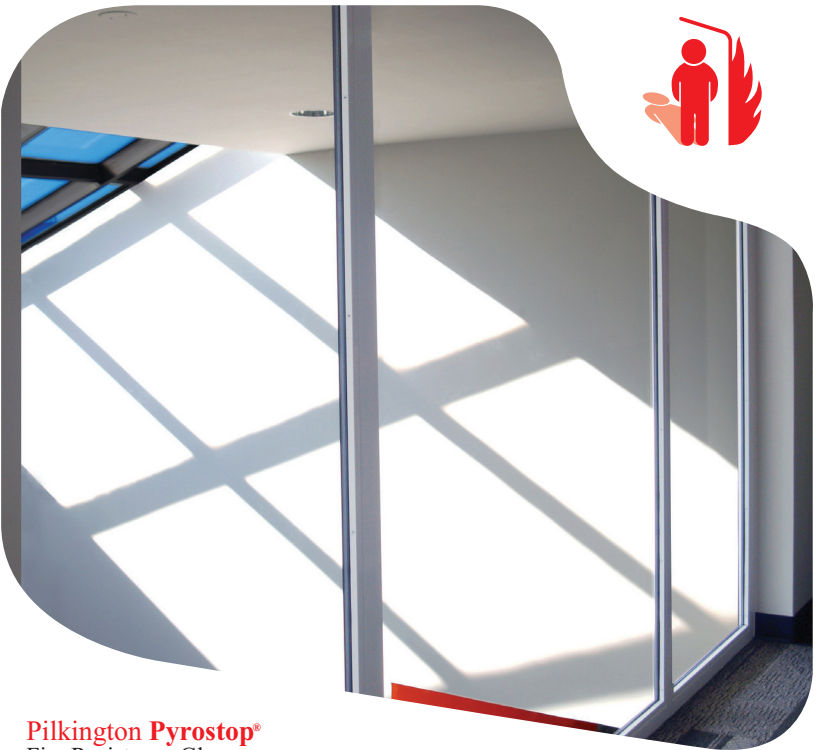


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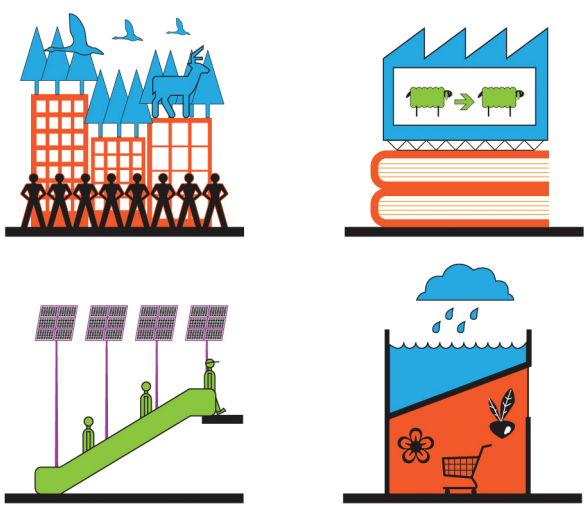
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## SPIRIT OF SÃO PAULO

One recent afternoon, a City College student named Murraja led me to the top of Rafael Viñoly's new Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, showing off the amphitheater on the roof—the crown atop Viñoly's radical redesign of an undistinguished 1950s library. Like the building's interior—with its central atrium allowing pin-ups to be communal events—the rooftop expressed an emphasis on public space and sharing work in a larger context. Even in a driving rain, the saffron-yellow theater, with seats looking south toward the Manhattan skyline, had an exhilarating impact. As Murraja waited for me to run my circuit around the theater, I couldn't help but think of the generation of Latin American architects who made bold moves under a big sky—Oscar Niemeyer, of course, but also Luis Barragán and, especially, João Vilanova Artigas.

Though Vilanova Artigas (1915–1985) had been a follower of Frank Lloyd Wright early in his career, he eventually embraced the Brutalist aesthetic of the so-called Brazilian Style epitomized

by Niemeyer and Lucio Costa. For Artigas, architecture was a way to expose social disparity, not a forum for what he saw as pat responses to social problems. He treated homes as he treated schools and bus stations: open spaces defined by vast roofs and ramps for circulation, where the stress was put on communal living, not privacy.

Last spring I went to see Vilanova Artigas' Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo in São Paulo, built in 1968. I'd read about the FAU, as it's called, and seen heroic photos of the building standing on its site like an arms-akimbo Superman, solitary and tough. But in real life, it was hidden by trees and vines that seemed ready to climb through rows of louvered windows behind its rough-hewn concrete shell. Like Viñoly's school at City College, its centerpiece is an atrium, a massive space with a grand ramp leading up through the building. No matter where I stood, I could pivot and see everything: students studying, pinning up work for a review, even taking a dance class. (As in Viñoly's school,

where uncomfortably low ceilings plague parts of the studios, here the individual classrooms, all on the building's periphery, were cramped and dark—a disdainful concession to the traditional school setup.) Sunlight filtered through skylights—now in dire need of repair—and angled in through the ground-floor entry, which is open to the outdoors. Despite its tough concrete, the FAU exuded a sense of lightness, a thrilling contradiction between material and effect.

A communist like many of his colleagues, Artigas saw design as a form of evangelism. The educated class that would lead the coming revolution would cut its ties to consumerism, so his architecture was going to teach them a lesson in austerity. His protégés, founders of the Arquitetura Nova movement, would address Brazil's class disparity in a very different way—conceiving well-made, inexpensive houses—but their education was informed by the FAU's intoxicating atrium, where Artigas demonstrates his belief in the power of collaboration.

Artigas was uniquely qualified

to design the FAU. As the leading member of its faculty, he had created the school's curriculum, a Bauhaus-style program that placed technical skills, history, and design on equal footing. The FAU was meant to embody that unity, and it does. Like the plaza underneath Lina Bo Bardi's Museu de Arte de São Paulo, the FAU atrium was designed not only to provoke conversation among disciplines but to host large-scale political and cultural events. There is an archival photograph of the space filled with thousands of students—a shot that would have symbolized much to the military government in power at the time of the school's inception.

**The tough concrete shell of Vilanova Artigas' architecture school in São Paulo (above) conceals a central atrium that embodies an ethic of collaboration (below).**

Will CCNY's new building foster the kind of analysis of design and class provoked by the FAU? Certainly the circumstances are different, but in a public school with a student body far more diverse than most, Viñoly's spur to interaction is an exciting start.

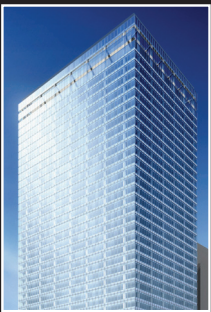
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